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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1261
RUCNIAID/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RHMFIISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001010

FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR HUDSON AND PITTMAN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL EAID KPKO UNSC SU

SUBJECT: SAF WITHDRAWAL FROM ABYEI AND UNMIS PATROLLING SUSPENDED
AFTER AGOK SHOOTING INCIDENT, PARTNERS SIGN ABYEI ARBITRATION
PROTOCOL

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On July 7, GNU and GoSS VPs Taha and Machar signed the Protocol for the Arbitration of the Abyei boundary dispute. Simultaneously, a shooting incident involving SPLA, SAF, and UNMIS personnel in Agok led to the serious wounding of two individuals and a halt to the withdrawal of the SAF 31ST Bde from Abyei. Through a single undisciplined act, the SPLA has provided the SAF with an easy excuse to again delay a key provision of the Abyei Roadmap. END SUMMARY.

Shooting in Agok Leads to Halt in SAF Withdrawal

¶2. (SBU) An altercation between SPLA and SAF soldiers in Agok on July 7 led to the shooting of an UNMIS Military Observer (UNMO) from Benin and an SAF national monitor by an SPLA soldier. Both injured men were medevaced from Agok to the UNMIS compound in Abyei 40 kms. away for emergency treatment, where they were reported to be in serious, but stable, condition. Later the UNMO was medevaced to Khartoum for onward transport to Nairobi; by the time he arrived in Khartoum, he was in a coma, with the bullet reportedly lodged in his brain. Agok is the current location of most of the 40,000 IDPs who fled Abyei during the fighting there in mid-May.

¶3. (SBU) UNMIS military reported that the altercation involved an SPLA soldier in a fistfight with a SAF and an SPLA national monitor. When the latter two individuals entered a vehicle, the SPLA soldier fired into the vehicle, wounding the SAF soldier in the arm, as well as seriously wounding the UNMO, who was not involved in the initial altercation. (Note: Embassy Khartoum issued a statement of regret July 8, which called on forces in the Abyei region to better control their soldiers as well as the full withdrawal of SPLA and SAF from Abyei, the full deployment of the JIUs, and the early installation of the interim administration. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) In response to the incident, SAF has halted the slow withdrawal of the 31st SAF Brigade from Abyei town, which it began on July 4 and which was continuing in a desultory fashion until now. Further, the SAF has once more told UNMIS that it cannot move north or south of its camp.

¶5. (SBU) UNMIS Force Commander General Paban Thapa traveled to Agok with the Ceasefire Joint Monitoring Commission. SRSG for Sudan Ashraf Qazi issued a statement July 8 strongly condemning the shooting. He called upon the SPLA to identify those soldiers responsible for wounding the two officers and to bring the perpetrators to justice. Qazi also strongly urged the parties not to allow this incident to impede or interfere with implementation of the Abyei road map.

GoS and SPLM Sign Abyei Boundary Arbitration Protocol

¶6. (SBU) On the same day as the shooting, GNU Vice President Ali Osman Taha and GoSS Vice President Riek Machar, in a ceremony at the

Presidential Palace in Khartoum, signed the Protocol on the arbitration of Abyei boundary dispute in accordance with their Abyei Roadmap agreement. However, the two sides remain deadlocked on the naming of the interim Abyei administration, specifically by the NCP's desire to nominate an ethnic-Misseriya to the post of Deputy Administrator. The SPLM warns that if the NCP insists on nominating a Misseriya, rather than an Ngok Dinka, it could be a deal-breaker.

COMMENT

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¶7. (SBU) The SPLA's lack of discipline has once again handed a temporary advantage to the NCP and the SAF. The 31st Brigade's withdrawal, along with freedom for UNMIS to patrol outside of town, were key provisions of the Abyei Roadmap. There had been real, if tenuous progress on both these issues. The SAF has made it abundantly clear since the Roadmap was signed a month ago that it does not want to withdraw the 31st Brigade from Abyei town, and it has been relying on a variety of transparent excuses since then to delay their departure. The start of its departure on July 4, however slow, was an unexpected and hopeful sign. The shooting of the two officers in Agok has provided the excuse the SAF needed to call a halt. We will continue to press the GOS regime to fully and rapidly withdraw the SAF 31st brigade from Abyei, as well as to once again allow complete freedom of movement by UNMIS. CDA also pressed GOSS Minister of the Presidency Luka Biong Deng July 8 on the need to improve control of SPLA forces (septel). Biong Deng promised to look into the incident.

FERNANDEZ